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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000050

SIPDIS

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/14

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [CE](#) [MV](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL NUMBER 004 (01/12/04)

CLASSIFIED BY DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION JAMES F. ENTWISTLE
FOR REASONS 1.5 B AND D.

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REPORTS THAT PRESIDENT WILL RESWEAR IN MINISTERS

1. (C) FYI. Further to the January 8 email concerning Ambassador Subasinghe's comments to the desk regarding the possible re-swearing in of Ministers Amaratunga and Barkeer Markar to their old Interior and Mass Communications portfolios, respectively, we just want to flag to you that these ministers have not yet been sworn back into their old jobs. There's been some speculation regarding this matter in the papers here, and UNP contacts have told us the President has indeed made the offer, but it seems that the PM and his advisors are reluctant to give their green light just yet. In the meantime, as you'll see in our readout of the Ambassador's Jan. 10 meeting with the PM, there doesn't seem to have been any sort of breakthrough in the cohabitation impasse. (POL)

TIGERS STRESS TRUCE SUPPORT, BUT BEHAVING BADLY

2. (C) FYI. In an interview printed in the local press on January 11, Tiger spokesman Daya Master reiterated the group's stand that under "no circumstances would it violate" the ceasefire agreement. He added that the Tigers were "closely reviewing" the political situation in the south, however. Daya Master's seemingly positive comments come in the wake of the PM's disturbing remarks calling on the President to take over responsibility for the ceasefire accord on January 7 (see Colombo 32, and previous).

3. (C) In the meantime, here's some examples of how the Tigers have been misbehaving lately:

-- On January 6, the Tigers detained two monitors from the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) for approximately four hours at gunpoint near the eastern port city of Trincomalee. Poloff spoke with SLMM spokeswoman Agnes Bragadottir, who said that the SLMM had written to the Tigers demanding an explanation of the incident, but as of January 12, had had no response. Bragadottir noted that the SLMM was considering the incident to be a violation of the ceasefire accord but had not yet formally ruled on the matter.

-- According to Bragadottir, the SLMM was also looking into allegations that the Tigers had made threats to the newly-installed commander of the GSL forces in Jaffna which, if proven, would also be a violation of the truce agreement.

-- On January 5, the Sri Lanka Army lodged a formal complaint against the Tigers for reportedly erecting a monument to fallen Tiger cadres within a government-controlled area in the Jaffna Peninsula. The SLMM has not yet ruled on this matter.

We are also looking into some potentially disturbing messages being sent out by pro-Tiger elements re the situation in the south. We'll get back to you with more on that. (POL)

LUNSTEAD